



# Something older from FIA

Family Independence Agency • Lansing, Michigan • April 5, 2004

Produced by FIA Office of Communications, Suite 1510, Grand Tower, Lansing

Click this hyperlink [FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov](mailto:FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov) anytime to send a story, letter or e-mail

## Today's big story

### What makes my unit so successful?

***Amidst the hubbub of reorganization, high caseloads, customer service and vision and values, employees continue to do exemplary work. Here's how one unit achieves excellence in its work.***

By Rosemary Williams, Family Independence Manager  
Kent County Family Independence Agency, Grand Rapids  
[WilliamsR8@michigan.gov](mailto:WilliamsR8@michigan.gov)

Of the 11 workers that are on my unit, I trained eight of them in-house. The training consisted of, but was not limited to weekly, one-hour meetings, for six consecutive months. During these meetings we would review case errors and policy manual items relating to these errors. I also provided training on how to locate policy in the manual. Seasoned workers were also given this one-on-one training.



**Members of Kent County 4200 Unit: front l-r Kerry Flanagan, Pam Smitter and Janice Alberda. Middle l-r Rosemary Williams, Robyn Bullock, Joanna Strom, Natasha Phose and Sandra Mannesto. Back l-r Kurt Unangst, LeeAnn Dailey, Eric Huff and Michelle Stankus.**

[FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov](mailto:FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov)

I would occasionally meet with them and discuss the policy errors that were made. I believe that we can all learn from each other's mistakes; I have developed a method that would utilize this concept. I make note of all the policy errors that were made for a particular time period, and as a unit, we discuss these errors. Individual workers would give a presentation to the unit on the manual item that correlated with their policy error(s). Employees are also given the opportunity to explain or defend why they made a particular decision on a case that "erred out."

In having the presentations and discussions at unit meetings, not only are we learning from each other's mistakes, we are utilizing the concepts of teamwork and inclusion. I am a firm believer that the aforementioned ideology promotes a positive, focused unit that seeks to obtain excellence. In obtaining excellence, it is not only important to understand the policy and nature of the work, but it is as equally important to maintain a positive work atmosphere.

I always convey to my unit that negative energy will defeat our goal of excellence. In helping to promote a positive atmosphere, I post motivational mini-posters that deal with focus, determination, integrity, and winners. Having these items along with an open door policy helps to promote and maintain the concept of a positive work place.

### *Inside*

<b>Q &amp; A.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>FIA people .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>News you can use.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Your letters .....</b>	<b>4</b>

Another important concept that I have adopted is the notion of celebration. I believe celebrating and/or rewarding employees for a job well done will ensure a sense of appreciation along with promoting and ensuring excellence in the future. For example, when workers reach 100 percent SOP I would reward them with a 100 Grand candy bar as a show of appreciation for going beyond the call of duty. When my unit received a banner for being number one with statistics, I treated them to an in-house lunch.

I constantly thank them for doing a great job as a group and individually. To build teamwork I brought in games for us to play at two potlucks. I believe it helped to build team spirit and unity. My unit is successful because my workers have made a conscious decision and effort to be team players. They handle constructive criticism in a positive way. They take pride in doing an excellent job. Giving them rewards keeps them motivated and gives them a feeling of pride.

In conclusion, I have adopted and promoted the concepts and practices of teamwork, inclusion, integrity, and celebration, which are in line with the governor's vision for the state of Michigan that, in turn, has produced excellence for my unit.

**Q:** What ever happened to TIP, the **Tuition Incentive Program**? How can a student find out if they are enrolled? And if they are not enrolled, how can they enroll?

**Dan Pfaff**, Macomb County

**A:** The Tuition Incentive Program is alive and well in Michigan Department of Treasury. Students are no longer eligible to apply; Treasury automatically determines their eligibility. We do a mailing to eligible students every six months. FIA provides us a database that



includes all kids who are eligible. Once we receive that information the mailing goes out and the response information is input into the system. When the student receives the direct mailing they must respond and immediately return the letter. This information must get to Treasury prior to the student's graduation date. Once they return the application, they are sent an eligibility determination letter. Thousands of applications do not

get mailed to the correct address because of the mobility of our clients. If a worker or a student feels that they may be eligible, all they have to do is call the **TIP Hotline 1-800-243-2847**. If they provide their Social Security number the person on the phone can look them up and see if they have applied and whether or not they are eligible. If the student does not show up in the TIP database but the caller feels that they should be eligible, you can request that their eligibility be investigated.

**Jennifer Wallace**

Outreach Coordinator for the Office of Information and Resources  
Michigan Higher Education Assistance Authority, Department of Treasury, Lansing  
[WallaceJR@michigan.gov](mailto:WallaceJR@michigan.gov)

**Q:** I have worked for the agency for 27 years in the Office of Human Resources in Wayne County (and) currently in Lansing. My question is, "**Why do we have welfare?**" I ask because of the things I have seen in Third World countries. I do mission work with my church and we do a lot of our mission in Africa. There is no welfare there and everyone must work, down to the children. I was just curious why we have welfare and if I could possibly receive a satisfying answer. Thanks!

**Josetta B. Duhart**, Personnel Management Representative  
Office of Human Resources, Lansing

**A:** Many public services in Michigan and the U.S. arrived here via our ancestors as part of European heritage. An FIA publication from 1989 called "Outreach" said the first legislation

**Got a question for the FIA? Send to:**

[FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov](mailto:FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov)

governing relief to the poor was passed before Michigan became a state. In 1790, the Northwest Territory government enacted a law requiring judges to appoint one or more overseers of the poor for each

township. "Their duties, in general, were to take notice of all poor and distressed families and persons, affording them proper and reasonable relief," it said. Michigan became a separate territory in 1805 and passed a new "poor" law that specified the territory as the responsible level of government. That responsibility was expanded after Michigan became a state in 1837.

"The legislation enabled our society to develop a sense of responsibility for those less fortunate families and children," said Jim Nye, FIA deputy director for field operations. "Looking back at the 'sweat shops' with young children working long hours, for little wages and in unpleasant environments, they missed the opportunity for a childhood and education that provides a ticket out of poverty."

Some surveyors of public assistance said there were three distinct periods of development in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: development of relief under President Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal" of the 1930s; expansion under President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" programs of the 1960s; and a new perspective under the welfare reform era of the 1990s. Since welfare reform, Family Independence Program adult recipients in Michigan have had to work or engage in work-related activities to continue receiving cash assistance benefits.

**Larry VanDeSande**

Editor

## What's in a name? You decide

Here are suggestions to name this newsletter and the people that suggested them. Do you like one? Got another idea? Please tell us; we've got to call it something soon! Send your vote to [FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov](mailto:FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov)

### The FIA Current

Glenn Addis, Ogemaw County

### Welfare Fare-Thee-Well

Chuck Clemens, Roscommon County

### FIA Forum

Mark Stevens, Genesee County

### fiaT

John Santeramo, DDS-Detroit

■ Roughly translates to "let it be" in Latin

### And Now You Know

Mike Smith, Genesee County

### Positive Points

Patti Parkham, Alpena County

### The Beacon

Susan Kenney, Iron County

### FIA Flash

Pamela Mack, Oakland County

### FIA Forward Focus Review

Bonnie Ewald, Oscoda County

### About You

Paul Dean, Human Resources, Lansing

### The Communicator

Beverly Jean Hodge, Genesee County

### FIALink

Leila Frangie, Human Resources, Lansing

### FIA Fervor

Sheila Santure, Monroe County

### Bridges

Anne O'Neill, Alger County

### The FIA Informer

Bonnie Bracken, St. Clair County

### Connections

Steve Barosko, Ofc. Professional Development, Lansing

### The Monthly Newsletter

Ted Pfeiffer, Family Services Administration, Lansing

### Michigan's *Finest In Action*

Sue Keagle, Adrian Training School

### FIA Profile

Charlotte Parker, Ingham County

### Statewide FIA Happenings

Ella Harrington, Kalamazoo County

### The FIA Telegraph

Paul Cloutier, Office of Native American Affairs, Lansing

### FIA Community News

Joan Sutberry, Office of Child Support, Lansing

### In the Know

Christine Doolittle, Departmental Services Administration, Lansing

### Heads Up

Roberta Cocquyt, Macomb County

### FIA Matters

Brenda Piekarski, Macomb County

## U.P. employee writes self-help book

Information: Renee Pangrazzi-Trudeau

[TrudeauR@michigan.gov](mailto:TrudeauR@michigan.gov)

Another FIA employee has been published, this time with a motivational book based on her experiences with families she met through the Dickinson County FIA.



Renee Pangrazzi-Trudeau and Bob Roberge hold a copy of Renee's book, "Tomorrow's Dream", a self-help book based in part on Renee's experiences with FIA customers.

FIA employee **Renee Pangrazzi-Trudeau** wrote a book that has recently been published by Publish America. Renee's goal in writing this book, called "Tomorrow's Dreams", was to motivate others to succeed in life. Her inspiration for the book came from working with low-income families through her job in the FIA.

"I basically wanted people to realize their full potential and their ability to succeed," she said.

Publish America says this about the book: "Tomorrow's Dream will allow you to focus on your past while preparing for a journey that will lead you to a lifetime of happiness. (It) has real-life experiences and success stories that will inspire you to take a close look at your own life. You will learn four steps in moving forward and forgetting about traumatic events in your life. Written as an easy read, Tomorrow's Dream allows you to dream!"

Renee is a family independence specialist and has been with FIA for four years. "The customers she works with are part of the target audience of this book," said Bob Roberge, director of Iron-Dickinson County FIA. The paperback is available through these web sites: [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com), [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) or [www.Publishamerica.com](http://www.Publishamerica.com).

## Foster care worker helps kids attend circus

Adapted from *Central Michigan Life*

February 25, 2004

[www.cm-life.com](http://www.cm-life.com)

A Gratiot County foster child sat wide-eyed on the edge of his seat as the dancers of the Shanghai Circus entered the stage. He was completely captivated by the performance and when it was over he went wild. The boy, an adopted child from Gratiot County, normally doesn't get the chance to attend these types of events. Recently, his family had been through a difficult time.

He was one of 24 people that received complimentary tickets to the circus when it appeared in Mt. Pleasant Feb. 24. **Donna Kriss**, a foster and adoptive recruiter working with Gratiot County Family Independence Agency, contacted Central Michigan University to see if they had any extra tickets for the show. University Events made them available.



Donna Kriss

"I am so extremely grateful for (the tickets)," Kriss said. "I called in Friday at 4 p.m. and by Friday at 5 p.m. I had given them all away."

Three families of adopted kids and foster kids accepted the tickets. Each of the kids was excited to see the circus. "When I called (Tuesday) afternoon, I could hear the kids in the background screaming, 'Tonight is the circus! Tonight is the circus!'" Kriss said.

"Donna's position is funded by Strong Families-Safe Children," said Clinton-Gratiot County FIA director Jan Baszler. "We are lucky in Gratiot County to have the support of our Multi-Purpose Collaborative Council; they fund this critical position."

## News you can use

### Partial Tuition Refund Program (Information: [PriceJ2@michigan.gov](mailto:PriceJ2@michigan.gov))

The Partial Tuition Refund Program is a means to reimburse a portion of the tuition and registration fee for courses and degrees that relate to the employee's current or another FIA position. The level of reimbursement is between 60-90 percent, depending on the level of education and type of worker making application. The Administrative Handbook Manual Policy for Partial Tuition Refund is available on the Office of Professional Development web page at <http://intranet-01.mfia.state.mi.us/opd/ptr/start.htm>

### How to write effective e-mail (Information: [WaterstradtJ@michigan.gov](mailto:WaterstradtJ@michigan.gov))

"How to Write Effective E-Mail" is a new web-based course for FIA employees. It explores the medium of communication via the Internet and discusses the advantages and pitfalls of e-mail communication. You will learn how to produce clear, focused, and well-organized e-mail and broaden your ability to convey your ideas successfully to others. You can access it at any time in the Office of Professional Development's learning resources database at <http://performance-architect.mfia.state.mi.us/resourceTools/SearchResources.asp?ResourceType=1&ResourceCategory=4> Click on "more info" next to the course name. It will take you about one hour to complete the course.



We misspelled **Lynne Martinez**'s name in the March 19 issue. Our apologies to Ms. Martinez, who directs Michigan's Office of Children's Ombudsman.

Your letters,  
intercepted  
and otherwise

**Date: March 29**

**To: [Andrea Horton](#), Foster Care Specialist  
[Linda Schrauben](#), Foster Care Licensing Specialist  
Ionia County FIA, Ionia**

We wanted to thank you for all that you have done for us. In a time where we were very unsure about having a new worker, you completely met our expectations, plus some! You have done an awesome job of following through, returning phone calls, following up on questions we might have and being there for us through most of this journey. Thank you for always seeking out answers, for taking time to do jobs that weren't always your responsibility. You will never know how much you have completed our lives. We wish you all the best and know you have represented FIA and the state of Michigan in a wonderful way. Thank you for making this experience a positive one. We really appreciate it!

**[Eric and MacKenzie Wells](#)**

Woodland

■ *The authors are foster-adoptive parents. This is a compilation of two letters submitted by Bobbie Christensen, a services supervisor with Ionia County FIA.*

**Date: Feb. 27**

**To: [Betsy Montgomery](#), Social Services Licensing Manager  
Office of Child and Adult Licensing, Jackson**

**Subj: [Janine Stephenson](#)**

I want to tell you how much I appreciated the help I received from our licensing consultant [Janine Stephenson](#). Our preschool is a non-profit cooperative preschool that is run by the parents of our school. At least part of our board changes every year so this re-licensing was new to everyone. Janine was extremely informative and was very willing to help me with all of my questions. She was very responsive to my many inquiries and needs. It was obvious that Janine had the best interest in the welfare of the children in mind and that her job was to help us provide a safe and enriching learning environment for our children. Thank you again for the guidance we received in re-licensing our preschool.

**[Pam Babbitt](#), Treasurer**

Humpty Dumpty Preschool, Eaton Rapids

■ *Janine Stephenson is a child day care licensing consultant with FIA Office of Child and Adult Licensing. That unit conducts evaluations and licenses providers, consults with organizations to improve the quality of service, and investigates complaints alleging rules or statute violations for licensed adult foster care, child day care and child welfare facilities.*

**Date: Feb. 12**

**To: [Joyce Johnson](#), District Manager  
Wayne County McNichols-Goddard District**

**Subj: [Patricia Woods](#)**

I wanted to take this opportunity to let you know what a wonderful employee [Patricia Woods](#) is. I happened to contact her while working with an oncology patient. This woman was reaching the point of discontinuing treatment because she had no insurance.

I assisted the patient in completing a Medicaid application and Ms. Woods was assigned to her case and, from there, things went from frustrating to hopeful. Ms. Woods has been extremely compassionate, attentive and responsive to me and this woman's needs. I have worked with many people through FIA and Ms. Woods is certainly a standout. Her positive attitude, kindness and thoroughness have literally given a terminally ill woman and her family hope for a future.

Ms. Woods actually answers her phone, returns calls and completes what she says she is going to do. Every contact I have had with her has been positive and she deserves to be acknowledged as an exceptional individual. It has been a true pleasure to work with Ms. Woods and she has truly made a difference in my patient's life. I cannot begin to tell you how grateful all of us are for such a special person. Ms. Woods has been a Godsend in a very difficult time.

**[Monique Willett](#)**

Van Elslander Cancer Center, Detroit

■ *Patricia Woods is an eligibility specialist with the Wayne County McNichols-Goddard District office in Detroit.*

**Something older from FIA is a product of  
Michigan's Family Independence Agency**

**[Marianne Udow](#), Director**

**[Karen Smith](#), Director, Office of Communications**

**[Larry VanDeSande](#), editor**

**Send stories, letters, photos & messages e-mail to:**

**[FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov](mailto:FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov)**